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ART. VI.—1. *The League of the Alps, The Siege of Valencia, The Vespers of Palermo, and other Poems.* By MRS FELICIA HEMANS. Boston. 1826. Hilliard, Gray, Little, & Wilkins. 8vo. pp. 480.

2. *The Forest Sanctuary, and other Poems.* By MRS FELICIA HEMANS. Boston. 1827. Hilliard, Gray, Little, & Wilkins. 8vo. pp. 232.

THE collection of Mrs Hemans's miscellaneous Poems opens with verses in honor of the Pilgrim Fathers. She has celebrated with solemnity and truth the circumstances which give sublimity to the glorious scene of their landing, and their descendants cannot but be pleased to see the devotedness, displayed by them, introduced into poetry, and incorporated among the bright examples, held up by the inventive as well as the historic muse for the admiration of mankind.

Freedom, not licentiousness, religious freedom, not the absence of religious rites, was the object for which the fathers came. An air of earnestness was thus originally imparted to the character of the country, and succeeding ages have not worn it away. Though it may suit the humor of moralizers to declaim against the degeneracy of the times, we believe that the country has of late years made advances in moral worth. We infer this from the more general diffusion of intelligence and the higher standard of learning; from the spirit of healthy action pervading all classes; from the diminished number of crimes; from the general security of property; from the rapid multiplication of Sabbath schools, than which no discovery of our age has been more important for the moral education of the people; from the philanthropy which seeks for the sources of vice, and restrains it by removing its causes; from the active and compassionate benevolence, which does not allow itself to consider any class so vicious or so degraded as to have forfeited its claim to humane attention, which seeks and relieves misery wherever it is concealed, and, embracing every continent in its regard, has its messengers in the remotest regions of the world. Religious freedom is the last right, which even in our days the inhabitants of this country would surrender. It would be easier to drive them from their houses and their lands, than to take from them the liberty of worshipping God according to the dictates of conscience. There is no general assertion of this right,

and no energetic display of zeal in maintaining it, solely because it is menaced by no alarming danger.

In a state of society like ours, there may be little room for the exercise of those arts, of which it is the chief aim to amuse and delight; and yet attention is by no means confined to those objects, which are directly connected with the advancement of personal or public wealth. For the costly luxuries of life and even for its elegant pleasures, there may as yet be little room; and still the morality of the nation be far from forming itself on the new system of morals, devised by our political economists. There has been no age, we assert it with confidence, there has been no people, where the efforts of mind, directly connected with the preservation of elevated feeling and religious earnestness, are more valued than they are by the better part of our own community. We cannot support, or we hold it not best to support, an expensive religious establishment, but every where the voice of religious homage and instruction is heard; we cannot set apart large estates to give splendor to literary distinction; but you will hardly find a retired nook, where only a few families seek their shelter near each other, so destitute, that the elements of knowledge are not freely taught; we cannot establish galleries for the various works of the arts of design, but the eye that can see the beauties of nature is common with us, and the recital of deeds of high worth meets with ready listeners. The luxuries, which are for display, are exceedingly little known; but the highest value is set on every effort of mind connected with the investigation of truth, or the nurture of generous and elevated sentiments.

Where the public mind had been thus formed, the poetry of Mrs Hemans was sure to find admirers. The exercise of genius, if connected with no respect for virtue, might have remained unnoticed; the theory, which treats of beauty, as of something independent of moral effect, is still without advocates among us. It has thus far been an undisputed axiom, that if a production is indecent or immoral, it for that very reason cannot claim to be considered beautiful.

We do not go so far as to assert, that there can be no merit in works of which the general tendency is immoral; but the merit, if there is any, does not lie in the immoral part, in the charm that is thrown round vice, but rather in an occasional gleam of better principles, in nature occasionally making her

voice heard above the din of the dissolute, in the pictures of loveliness and moral truth, that shine out through the darkness. Amidst all the horrors and depravity of superstition, the strange and the abominable vagaries of the human imagination, exercised on religion in heathenish ignorance, the observing mind may yet recognise the spirit that connects man with a better world. And so it is with poetry; amidst all the confusion which is manifest where the heavenly gift is under the control of a corrupted judgment, something of its native lustre will still appear. When we see the poet of transcendent genius, delineating anything but the higher part of our nature, when we observe how, after borrowing fiendish colors, he describes states of mind, with which devils only should have sympathy, rails at human nature in a style which spiteful misanthropy alone can approve, or gives descriptions of sensuality, fit only for the revels of Comus, when we see him 'hurried down the adulterate age, adding pollutions of his own,' we can have little to say to excuse or to justify an admiration of poetic talent, till we are reconciled to human nature and the muse by the pure lustre of better guided minds.

In what view of the subject can it be held a proper design of poetry to render man hateful to himself? How can it delight or instruct us to see our fellow men, ranged under the two classes of designing villains, and weak dupes? Or what sources of poetic inspiration are left, if all the relations of social life are held up to derision, and every generous impulse scorned as the result of deluded confidence?

To demand that what is called *poetical justice* should be found in every performance may be unreasonable, since the events of life do not warrant us in expecting it; but we may demand what is of much more importance, *moral justice*, a consistency of character, a conformity of the mind to its career of action. It may not be inconsistent with reality, though it is with probability, that an unprincipled miscreant, governing himself in his gratifications by the narrowest selfishness, should be successful in his pursuits; but it is unnatural and false to give to such a nature any of the attributes of goodness. Vice is essentially mean and low; it has no dignity, no courage, no beauty; and while the poet can never impart to a production, tending to promote vice, the power and interest which belong to the worthy delineation of honorable actions, he can never invest a false heart with the noble qualities of a generous one.

Observe in this respect the manner of the dramatic poet, who is acknowledged to have delineated the passions with the greatest fidelity. Shakspeare describes the mind as gradually sinking under the influence of the master passion. It stamps itself on the whole soul, and obliterates all the finer traces in which humanity had written a witness of gentler qualities. Macbeth is a moral picture of terrific sublimity, and an illustration of that *moral* justice, which we contend should never be wanting. The one, strong passion moulds the character, and blasts every tender sentiment. When once Othello is jealous, his judgment is gone; the selfishness of Richard leads to wanton cruelty. In one of Shakspeare's tragedies, not a crime, but a fault is the foundation of the moral interest. Here too he is consistent, and the irresolution of Hamlet leaves his mind without energy, and his contending passions without terror. We might explain our views by examples from the comedies of the great dramatist, but Macbeth and Richard furnish the clearest illustration of them. And it is in such exhibitions of the power of vice to degrade, that 'gorgeous tragedy' performs her severest office, lifting up the pall which hides the ghastliness of unprincipled depravity, and showing us, where vice gains control, the features, that before may have been resplendent with loveliness, marred and despoiled of all their sweet expression.

There can then be no more hideous fault in a literary work than profligacy. Levity is next in order. The disposition to trifle with topics of the highest moment, to apply the levelling principle to the emotions of the human mind, to hold up to ridicule the exalted thoughts and kindling aspirations of which human nature is capable, can at best charm those only, who have failed to enter the true avenues to happiness. Such works may be popular, because the character of the public mind may for a season be corrupt. A literature, consisting of such works, is the greatest evil, with which a nation can be cursed. National poverty is nothing in comparison, for poverty is remedied by prudent enterprise; but such works poison the life-blood of the people, the moral vigor, which alone can strive for liberty and honor. The apologists for this class of compositions, in which Voltaire and La Fontaine are the greatest masters, defend it on the ground, that it is well adapted to give pleasure to minds, which have been accustomed to it, and that foreigners need only a different moral education to be able to enjoy it. Now without wasting a word on the enormity of defending what

is intrinsically sensual, we reply merely on the score of effect. He who adapts his inventions to a particular state of society, can please no further; he depends on circumstances for his popularity; he does not appeal to man, but to accidental habits, a fleeting state of the public mind; he is the poet, not of nature, but of a transient fashion. The attraction which comes from the strangeness or novelty of the manner is of very little value. On the most brilliant night a meteor would be followed by all eyes for a while; and why? Because it is as evanescent as bright; we must gaze at once, or it will be too late. Yet the mind soon returns to the contemplation of the eternal stars which light up the heavens with enduring lustre. Any popularity, obtained by gratifying a perverse taste, is essentially transitory; while all that is benevolent and social, all that favors truth and goodness, is of universal and perpetual interest.

These are but plain inferences from facts in the history of literature. The plays of Dryden were written to please an audience of a vicious taste; they may have been received with boisterous applause, but nobody likes them now, though in their form not unsuited to the stage; and as for the grossest scenes, any merit in the invention is never spoken of, as compensating for their abominable coarseness. On the other hand, Milton's *Comus*, though in its form entirely antiquated, has the beautiful freshness of everlasting youth, delights the ardent admirer of good poetry, and is always showing new attractions to the careful critic. And where lies this immense difference in the lasting effect of these two writers? Dryden, it is true, fell far short of Milton in poetic genius; but the true cause lies in this; virtue, which is the soul of song, is wanting in the plays of Dryden, while the poetry of Milton bears the impress of his own magnanimity.

We are contending for no sickly morality; we would shut out the poet from the haunts of libertinism, not from the haunts of men; we would have him associate with his fellows, hold intercourse with the great minds that light up the gloom of ages, and share in the best impulses of human nature; and not under the influence of a too delicate sensibility treat only of the harmless flowers, and the innocent birds, and the exhilarating charm of agreeable scenery; and still less in the spirit of a sullen misanthropy delight in obscure abstractions, find comfort only in solitude, and rejoice or pretend to rejoice chiefly in the mountains, and the ocean, and the low places of the earth. Their pur-

suit of moral beauty does not lead to an affected admiration, or an improper idolatry of the visible creation. The genius of the poet can impart a portion of its eloquence to the external world, and elevate creation by connecting it with moral associations. But descriptions, except of scenes where moral beings are to move, possess little interest. If landscape painting is an inferior branch of that art, though the splendid works of Claude demand praise without measure, landscape poetry is a kind of affectation, an unnatural result of excessive refinement. Description is important, but subordinate. The external world with all its gorgeousness and varied forms of beauty ; the cataract 'with its glory of reflected light ;' the forests as they wave in the brilliancy of early summer ; the flowers that are crowded in gardens, or waste their sweetness on the desert air ; 'the noise of the hidden brook that all night long in the leafy months sings its quiet tune to the sleeping woods ;' the ocean, whether reposing in tranquil majesty or tossed by the tempest ; night, when the heavens are glittering with the splendor of the constellations ; morning, when one perfect splendor beams in the sky, and is reflected in a thousand colors from the glittering earth, these are not the sublimest themes, that awaken the energies of the muse. It is mind, and mind only, which can exhibit the highest beauty. The hymn of martyrdom, the strength by which the patriot girds himself to die, 'God's breath in the soul of man,' the unconquerable power of generous passion, the hopes and sorrows of humanity, love, devotion, and all the deep and bright springs of affection, these are higher themes, of permanent interest and exalted character.

Here too we find an analogy between poetic and religious feeling. The image of God is to be sought for, not so much in the outward world, as in the mind. No combination of inanimate matter can equal the sublimity and wonderful power of life. To impart organic life with the power of reproduction is a brighter display of Omnipotence than any arrangement of the inanimate, material world. A swarm of flies, as through their short existence they buzz and wheel in the summer's sun, offer as clear and to some minds a clearer demonstration of Omnipotence, than the everlasting, but silent courses of the planets. But moral life is the highest creation of divine power. We at least know and can conceive of none higher. We are, therefore, not to look for God among the rivers and the forests, nor yet among the planets and the stars, but in the hearts of men ; he is not the God of the dead, but of the living.

Those who accord with the general views, which we have here maintained, will be prepared to express unqualified approbation of the literary career of Mrs Hemans. Had her writings been merely harmless, we should not have entered into an analysis of them; but the moral charm, which is spread over them, is so peculiar, so full of nature and truth and deep feeling, that her productions claim at once the praise of exquisite purity and poetic excellence. She adds the dignity of her sex to a high sense of the duties of a poet; she writes with buoyancy, yet with earnestness; her poems bear the impress of a character worthy of admiration. In the pursuit of literary renown she never forgets what is due to feminine reserve. We perceive a mind, endowed with powers to aspire; and are still further pleased to find no unsatisfied cravings, no passionate pursuit of remote objects, but high endowments, graced by contentment. There is plainly the consciousness of the various sorrow to which life is exposed, and with it the spirit of resignation. She sets before herself a clear and exalted idea of what a female writer should be, and is on the way to realize her own idea of excellence. Living in domestic retirement in a beautiful part of Wales, it is her own feelings and her own experience, which she communicates to us. We cannot illustrate our meaning better than by introducing our readers at once to Mrs Hemans herself, as she describes to us the occupations of a day.

AN HOUR OF ROMANCE.

‘There were thick leaves above me and around,
And low sweet sighs, like those of childhood’s sleep,
Amidst their dinness, and a fitful sound
As of soft showers on water—dark and deep
Lay the oak shadows o’er the turf, so still,
They seem’d but pictur’d glooms—a hidden rill
Made music, such as haunts us in a dream,
Under the fern tufts; and a tender gleam
Of soft green light, as by the glowworm shed,
Came pouring through the woven beech boughs down,
And steep’d the magic page wherein I read
Of royal chivalry and old renown,
A tale of Palestine.*—Meanwhile the bee
Swept past me with a tone of summer hours,
A drowsy bugle, wafting thoughts of flowers,
Blue skies, and amber sunshine—brightly free,

* ‘The Talisman—Tales of the Crusaders.’

On filmy wings the purple dragonfly
 Shot glancing like a fairy javelin by ;
 And a sweet voice of sorrow told the dell
 Where sat the lone wood-pigeon.

But ere long,
 All sense of these things faded, as the spell,
 Breathing from that high gorgeous tale, grew strong
 On my chain'd soul—'twas not the leaves I heard ;
 —A Syrian wind the lion-banner stirr'd,
 Through its proud floating folds—'twas not the brook,
 Singing in secret through its grassy glen—
 A wild shrill trumpet of the Saracen
 Peal'd from the desert's lonely heart, and shook
 The burning air.—Like clouds when winds are high,
 O'er glittering sands flew steeds of Araby,
 And tents rose up, and sudden lance and spear
 Flash'd where a fountain's diamond wave lay clear,
 Shadow'd by graceful palm-trees.—Then the shout
 Of merry England's joy swell'd freely out,
 Sent through an Eastern heaven, whose glorious huc
 Made shields dark mirrors to its depths of blue ;
 And harps were there—I heard their sounding strings
 As the waste echoed to the mirth of kings.

The bright masque faded—unto life's worn track
 What call'd me, from its flood of glory, back ?
 —A voice of happy childhood !—and they pass'd,
 Banner, and harp, and Paynim trumpet's blast—
 Yet might I scarce bewail the vision gone,
 My heart so leapt to that sweet laughter's tone.'

pp. 143—145.

The poetry is here as beautiful as the scene described is quiet and pleasing. It forms an amiable picture of the occupations of a contemplative mind. The language, versification, and imagery are of great merit, the beauties of nature described by a careful observer ; the English scene is placed in happy contrast with the Eastern, and the dream of romance pleasantly disturbed by the cheerfulness of life. But we make but sorry work at commenting on what the reader must feel.

If we would form a right estimate of the literary career of Mrs Hemans, it is but justice to her to remark, that it has been begun and continued under many disadvantages. A woman has always much to struggle with, on entering the lists of authorship, and she was more peculiarly left to her own resources and her own efforts, passing her life in the bosom of domestic retire-

ment, remote from all the advantages of literary intercourse. To her own mind and her native endowments is she solely indebted for the name she has now acquired. The first productions, by which she became known, were 'The Restoration of the Works of Art to Italy,' and 'Modern Greece,' both written at an early age, and first published in 1816 and 1817. These were followed by 'Translations from Camoens and other Poets, with Original Poetry.' These translations are many of them very beautiful; but her own short poems, more recently written, have far surpassed them. In 1819 were published 'Tales and Historic Scenes in Verse.' They are, as it were, the *studies* of an artist, whose powers are rapidly maturing. One of them in particular we must notice, 'Alaric in Italy,' for its similarity in subject to 'The Dirge of Alaric,' a noble effusion, that has justly obtained extensive admiration. In 1820 Mrs Hemans published 'The Skeptic,' a poem of great merit for its style and its sentiments, of which we shall give a rapid sketch. She considers the influence of unbelief on the affections and gentler part of our nature, and, after pursuing the picture of the misery consequent on doubt, shows the relief that may be found in the thoughts that have their source in immortality. Glancing at pleasure as the only resort of the skeptic, she turns to the sterner tasks of life.

'E'en youth's brief hours,
Survive the beauty of their loveliest flowers. * * *
The soul's pure flame the breath of storms must fan,
And pain and sorrow claim their nursling—Man.'

But then the skeptic has no relief in memory, for memory recalls no joys, but such as were transitory, and known to be such; and as for Hope,

'She, who like Heaven's own sunbeam smiles for all,
Will *she* speak comfort? Thou hast shorn her plume,
That might have raised thee far above the tomb,
And hush'd the only voice whose angel tone
Sooths, when all melodies of joy are flown.'

The poet then asks, if an infidel dare love; and, having no home for his thoughts in a better world, nurse such feelings as delight to enshrine themselves in the breast of a parent. She addresses him on the insecurity of an attachment to a vain idol, from which death may at any time divide him '*forever*.'

'If there be sorrow in a parting tear,
Still let "*forever*" vibrate on thine ear.'

* * * * *

‘It is not thine to raise
 To yon pure heaven, thy calm confiding gaze,
 No gleam reflected from that realm of rest,
 Steals on the darkness of thy troubled breast ;
 Not for thine eye shall Faith divinely shed
 Her glory round the image of the dead ;
 And if, when slumber’s lonely couch is prest,
 The form departed be thy spirit’s guest,
 It bears no light from purer worlds to this ;
 Thy future lends not e’en a dream of bliss.’

For relief the infidel is referred to the Christian religion, in a strain, which unites the fervor of devotion with poetic sensibility.

But perhaps the skeptic scorns the advice, and like the heathen who was chained to a rock to be the constant prey of the vulture, for whom he himself produced sustenance, the pride of reason may support the infidel principles which gnaw at his heart. To him the mirth of frenzy, the laughter of delirious despair must read a lesson.

‘They tell thee, reason, wandering from the ray
 Of Faith, the blazing pillar of her way,
 In the mid darkness of the stormy wave,
 Forsook the struggling soul she could not save.
 Weep not, sad moralist ! o’er desert plains,
 Strew’d with the wrecks of grandeur—mouldering fanes,
 Arches of triumph, long with weeds o’ergrown,
 And regal cities, now the serpent’s own ;
 Earth has more awful ruins—one lost mind,
 Whose star is quench’d, hath lessons for mankind
 Of deeper import than each prostrate dome,
 Mingling its marble with the dust of Rome.’

The poem proceeds to depict in a forcible manner, the unfortunate state of a mind, which acquires every kind of knowledge but that which gives salvation, and, having gained possession of the secrets of all ages, and communed with the majestic minds that shine along the pathway of time, neglects nothing but eternity. Such an one, in the season of suffering, finds relief in suicide, and escapes to death as to an eternal rest. The thought of death recurs to the mind of the poet, and calls forth a fervent prayer for the divine presence and support in the hour of dissolution ; for the hour, when the soul is brought to the mysterious verge of another life, is an ‘awful one.’

‘ In the pride
 Of youth and health, by sufferings yet untried,
 We talk of death, as something, which ’t were sweet
 In Glory’s arms exultingly to meet,
 A closing triumph, a majestic scene,
 Where gazing nations watch the hero’s mien,
 As undismay’d amidst the tears of all,
 He folds his mantle regally to fall !

Hush, fond enthusiast ! still obscure and lone,
 Yet not less terrible because unknown,
 Is the last hour of thousands ;—they retire
 From life’s throng’d path, unnoticed to expire,
 As the light leaf, whose fall to ruin bears
 Some trembling insect’s little world of cares,
 Descends in silence—while around waves on
 ‘The mighty forest, reckless what is gone !
 Such is man’s doom—and, ere an hour be flown,
 —Start not, thou trifler !—such may be thine own.’

This is followed by an allusion to the strong love of life which belongs to human nature, and the instinctive apprehension with which the parting mind, musing on its future condition, asks of itself mystic questions, that it cannot solve. But through the influence of religion,

‘ He, whom the busy world shall miss no more
 Than morn one dewdrop from her countless store,
 Earth’s most neglected child, with trusting heart,
 Call’d to the hope of glory, shall depart.’

After some lines expressing the spirit of English patriotism, in a manner, with which foreigners can only be pleased, the poem closes with the picture of a mother, teaching her child the first lessons of religion by holding up the divine example of the Savior.

We have been led into a longer notice of this poem, for it illustrates the character of Mrs Hemans’s manner. We perceive in it a loftiness of purpose, an earnestness of thought, sometimes made more interesting by a tinge of melancholy, a depth of religious feeling, a mind alive to all the interests, gratifications, and sorrows of social life.

In enumerating the earlier productions of Mrs Hemans, we have omitted to mention two prize poems, one entitled ‘ Wallace,’ and the other on a less promising subject. They have never been republished, and are, therefore, not very generally known. The latter we have never seen.

The 'Vespers of Palermo' was the earliest of the dramatic productions of our author. The period in which the scene is laid, is sufficiently known from the title of the play. The whole is full of life and action. The same high strain of moral propriety marks this piece, as all others of her writings. The hero is an enthusiast for glory, for liberty, and for virtue ; and on his courage, his forbearance, the integrity of his love, making the firmness of his patriotism appear doubtful, rests the interest of the plot. It is worthy of remark, that some of its best parts have already found their way into an excellent selection of pieces for schools, and thus contribute to give lessons of morality to those who are most susceptible of the interest of tragedy.

It may not be so generally remembered, that the same historical event was made the subject of a French tragedy, about the same time that the English one was written, and by a poet now of very great popularity in France. We hesitate not to give the preference to Mrs Hemans, for invention and interest, accurate delineation of character and adherence to probability. Both the tragedies are written in a style of finished elegance.

The 'Siege of Valencia' is a dramatic poem, but not intended for representation. The story is extremely simple. The Moors, who besiege Valencia, take the two sons of the governor, Gonzalez, captive, as they came to visit their father ; and now the ransom demanded for them is the surrender of the city ; they are to die, if the place is not yielded up. Elmina, the mother of the boys, and Ximena, their sister, are the remaining members of a family, to which so dreadful an option is submitted. The poem is one of the highest merit. The subject is of great dignity, being connected with the defence of Spain against the Moors, and at the same time it is of the greatest tenderness, offering a succession of the most moving scenes that can be imagined to occur in the bosom of a family. The father is firm ; the daughter is heroic ; the mother falters. She finds her way to the Moorish camp, sees her children, forms a plan for betraying the town, and then is not able to conceal her grief and her design from her husband. He immediately sends a defiance to the Moors ; his children are brought out and beheaded ; a *sortie* is made from the besieged city ; finally the king of Spain arrives to the rescue, the wrongs of Gonzalez are avenged ; he himself dies in victory, and the

poem closes with a picture of his wife, moved by the strongest grief, of which she is yet able to restrain the expression. The great excellence of the poem lies in the delineation of the struggle between the consciousness of duty and maternal fondness. We believe none but a mother could have written it. We will quote a few passages, and leave it to our readers to commend.

Elmina learns of her husband the terrible choice submitted to them. The mother entreats ;

‘ I *must* be heard !

Give me my sons !

Gonzalez. That they may live to hide
With covering hands th’ indignant flush of shame
On their young brows, when men shall speak of him
They call’d their father ?—Was the oath, whereby,
On th’ altar of my faith, I bound myself,
With an unswerving spirit to maintain
This free and christian city for my God,
And for my king, a writing traced on sand ?
That passionate tears should wash it from the earth,
Or e’en the life-drops of a bleeding heart
Efface it, as a billow sweeps away
The last light vessel’s wake ?—Then never more
Let man’s deep vows be trusted !—though enforced
By all th’ appeals of high remembrances,
And silent claims o’ th’ sepulchres, wherein
His fathers with their stainless glory sleep,
On their good swords ! Think’st thou *I* feel no pangs ?
He that hath given me sons, doth know the heart
Whose treasures he recalls.—Of this no more.
’Tis vain. I tell thee that the inviolate cross
Still, from our ancient temples, must look up
Through the blue heavens of Spain, though at its foot
I perish, with my race.’

* * * * * *

‘ *Elmina.* What ! must we burst all ties
Wherewith the thrilling cords of life are twined ;
And for this task’s fulfilment, can it be
That man, in his cold heartlessness, hath dared
To number and to mete us forth the sands
Of hours, nay, moments ?—Why, the sentenced wretch,
He on whose soul there rests a brother’s blood
Pour’d forth in slumber, is allow’d more time
To wean his turbulent passions from the world

His presence doth pollute !—It is not thus !
We must have Time to school us.

Gonzalez. We have but
To bow the head in silence, when Heaven's voice
Calls back the things we love.

Elmina. Love ! love !—there are soft smiles and gentle words,

And there are faces skilful to put on
The look we trust in—and 'tis mockery all !
—A faithless mist, a desert-vapor, wearing
The brightness of clear waters, thus to cheat
The thirst that semblance kindled !—There is none,
In all this cold and hollow world, no fount
Of deep, strong, deathless love, save that within
A mother's heart.—It is but pride, wherewith
To his fair son the father's eye doth turn,
Watching his growth. Aye, on the boy he looks,
The bright glad creature springing in his path,
But as the heir of his great name, the young
And stately tree, whose rising strength ere long
Shall bear his trophies well.—And this is love !
This is *man's* love !—What marvel ?—*you* ne'er made
Your breast the pillow of his infancy,
While to the fulness of your heart's glad heavings
His fair cheek rose and fell ; and his bright hair
Waved softly to your breath !—*You* ne'er kept watch
Beside him, till the last pale star had set,
And morn, all dazzling, as in triumph broke
On your dim weary eye ; not *yours* the face
Which, early faded through fond care for him,
Hung o'er his sleep, and, duly as heaven's light,
Was there to greet his wakening ! *You* ne'er smooth'd
His couch, ne'er sung him to his rosy rest,
Caught his least whisper, when his voice from yours
Had learn'd soft utterance ; press'd your lip to his,
When fever parch'd it ; hush'd his wayward cries,
With patient, vigilant, never-wearied love !
No ! these are *woman's* tasks !—In these her youth,
And bloom of cheek, and buoyancy of heart,
Steal from her all unmark'd !—My boys ! my boys !
Hath vain affection borne with all for this ?
—Why were ye given me ?' pp. 173—181.

Elmina meets with a priest, and holds a long discourse with him. She obtains of him no relief for her mind. 'Let them die,' he answers to her questions.

' Let them die *now*, thy children ! so thy heart
 Shall wear their beautiful image all undimm'd,
 Within it, to the last ! Nor shalt thou learn
 The bitter lesson, of what worthless dust
 Are framed the idols, whose false glory binds
 Earth's fetter on our souls !—Thou think'st it much
 To mourn the early dead ; but there are tears
 Heavy with deeper anguish ! We endow
 Those whom we love, in our fond passionate blindness,
 With power upon our souls, too absolute
 To be a mortal's trust ! Within their hands
 We lay the flaming sword, whose stroke alone
 Can reach our hearts, and *they* are merciful,
 As they are strong, that wield it not to pierce us !
 Aye, fear them, fear the loved !'

p. 199.

We have no room for further quotations ; or the scene in which Elmina, after her visit to the Moorish camp, meets her daughter and her husband, the scene in which her daughter expires, and that in which the battle of the king of Spain with the Moors is described, would furnish us with abundant matter.

We will now say a few words of 'The Forest Sanctuary.' But it so abounds with beauty, is so highly finished, and animated by so generous a spirit of moral heroism, that we can do no justice to our views of it in the narrow space, which our limits allow us. A Spanish Protestant flies from persecution at home to religious liberty in America. He has imbibed the spirit of our own fathers, and his mental struggles are described in verses, with which the descendants of the pilgrims must know how to sympathize. We dare not enter on an analysis. From one scene at sea in the second part we will make a few extracts. The exile is attended by his wife and child ; but his wife remains true to the faith of her fathers.

' "*Ora pro nobis, mater !*"—What a spell
 Was in those notes, with day's last glory dying
 On the flush'd waters !—seem'd they not to swell
 From the far dust, wherein my sires were lying
 With crucifix and sword ?—Oh ! yet how clear
 Comes their reproachful sweetness to mine ear !
 "*Ora !*"—with all the purple waves replying,
 All my youth's visions rising in the strain—
 —And I had thought it much to bear the rack and chain !

Torture !—the sorrow of affection's eye,
 Fixing its meekness on the spirit's core,
 Deeper, and teaching more of agony,
 May pierce than many swords!—and this I bore
 With a mute pang. Since I had vainly striven
 From its free springs to pour the truth of heaven
 Into thy trembling soul, my Leonor !
 Silence rose up where hearts no hope could share :
 —Alas ! for those that love, and may not blend in prayer !

We could not pray together 'midst the deep,
 Which, like a flood of sapphire, round us lay,
 Through days of splendor, nights too bright for sleep,
 Soft, solemn, holy ! We were on our way
 Unto the mighty Cordillera land,
 With men whom tales of that world's golden strand
 Had lured to leave their vines.—Oh ! who shall say
 What thoughts rose in us, when the tropic sky
 Touch'd all its molten seas with sunset's alchemy ?

pp. 74, 75.

The strength of Leonor sinks under her sufferings, and
 meantime the ship is becalmed.

'I knew not all—yet something of unrest
 Sat on my heart. Wake, ocean-wind ! I said ;
 Waft us to land, in leafy freshness drest,
 Where through rich clouds of foliage o'er her head,
 Sweet day may steal, and rills unseen go by,
 Like singing voices, and the green earth lie
 Starry with flowers, beneath her graceful tread !
 —But the calm bound us 'midst the glassy main ;
 Ne'er was her step to bend earth's living flowers again.

* * * *

A fearful thing that love and death may dwell
 In the same world !—She faded on—and I—
 Blind to the last, there needed death to tell
 My trusting soul that she *could* fade to die !
 Yet, ere she parted, I had mark'd a change,
 —But it breathed hope—'twas beautiful, though strange :
 Something of gladness in the melody
 Of her low voice, and in her words a flight
 Of airy thought—alas ! too perilously bright !

* * * *

On the mid seas a knell !—for man was there,
 Anguish and love—the mourner with his dead !
 A long low rolling knell—a voice of prayer—

Dark glassy waters, like a desert spread—
 And the pale shining Southern Cross on high,
 Its faint stars fading from a solemn sky,
 Where mighty clouds before the dawn grew red ;—
 Were these things round me ?—Such o'er memory sweep
 Wildly when aught brings back that burial of the deep.

* * * *

The wind rose free and singing :—when for ever,
 O'er that sole spot of all the watery plain,
 I could have bent my sight with fond endeavor
 Down, where its treasure was, its glance to strain ;
 Then rose the reckless wind !—Before our prow
 The white foam flash'd—ay, joyously—and thou
 Wert left with all the solitary main
 Around thee—and thy beauty in my heart,
 And thy meek sorrowing love,—oh ! where could *that* depart ?

I will not speak of woe ; I may not tell—
 Friend tells not such to friend—the thoughts which rent
 My fainting spirit, when its wild farewell
 Across the billows to thy grave was sent,
 Thou there most lonely !—He that sits above,
 In his calm glory, will forgive the love
 His creatures bear each other, ev'n if blent
 With a vain worship ; for its close is dim
 Ever with grief, which leads the wrung soul back to Him !

And with a milder pang if now I bear
 To think of thee in thy forsaken rest,
 If from my heart be lifted the despair,
 The sharp remorse with healing influence press'd,
 If the soft eyes that visit me in sleep
 Look not reproach, though still they seem to weep ;
 It is that He my sacrifice hath bless'd,
 And fill'd my bosom, through its inmost cell,
 With a deep chastening sense that all at last is well.'

pp. 76—84.

But we must cease making extracts, for we could not transfer all that is beautiful in the poem, without transferring the whole.

It has been said, that religion can never be made a subject of interest in poetry. The position is a false one, refuted by the close alliance between poetic inspiration and sacred enthusiasm. Irreligion has certainly no place in poetry. There may have been atheist philosophers ; an atheist poet is an

impossibility. The poet may doubt and reason like Hamlet, but the moment he acquiesces in unbelief, there is an end to the magic of poetry. Imagination can no longer throw lively hues over the creation; the forests cease to be haunted; the sea, and the air, and the heavens to teem with life. The highest interest, we think, attaches to Mrs Hemans's writings, from the spirit of Christianity which pervades them.

The poetry of our author is tranquillizing in its character, calm and serene. We beg pardon of the lovers of excitement, but we are seriously led to take notice of this quality as of a high merit. A great deal has been said of the sublimity of directing the passions; we hold it a much more difficult, and a much more elevated task, to restrain them; it may be sublime to ride on the whirlwind, and direct the storm; but it seems to us still more sublime to appease the storm, and still the whirlwind. Virgil, no mean authority, was of this opinion. The French are reported to be particularly fond of effect and display; but we remember to have read, that even in the splendid days of Napoleon, the simplicity of vocal music surpassed in effect the magnificence of a numerous band. It was when Napoleon was crowned emperor in the cathedral of Nôtre Dame. The Parisians, wishing to distinguish the occasion by some novel exhibition, and to produce a great effect, filled the orchestra with eighty harps, which were all struck together with unequalled skill. The fashionable world was in raptures. Presently the pope entered, and some thirty of his singers, who came with him from Rome, received him with the powerful *Tu es Petrus* of the old fashioned Scarlatti, and the simple majesty of the air, assisted by no instruments, annihilated in a moment the whole effect of the preceding fanfaronade. And in literature the public taste seems to us already weary of those productions which aim at astonishing and producing a great effect, and there is now an opportunity of pleasing by the serenity of contemplative excellence.

It is the high praise of Mrs Hemans's poetry, that it is feminine. The sex may well be pleased with her productions, for they could hardly have a better representative in the career of letters. All her works seem to come from the heart, to be natural and true. The poet can give us nothing but the form under which the objects he describes present themselves to his own mind. That form must be noble, or it is not worthy of our consideration; it must be consistent, or it will fail to be

true. Now in the writings of Mrs Hemans we are shown, how life and its concerns appear to woman ; and hear a mother entrusting to verse her experience and observation. So in 'The Hebrew Mother,' 'the spring tide of nature' swells high as she parts from her son, on devoting him to the service of the temple.

'Alas ! my boy, thy gentle grasp is on me,
The bright tears quiver in thy pleading eyes,
And now fond thoughts arise,
And silver cords again to earth have won me ;
And like a vine thou claspest my full heart—
How shall I hence depart ?'

'And oh ! the home whence thy bright smile hath parted,
Will it not seem as if the sunny day
Turn'd from its door away ?
While through its chambers wandering, wearyhearted,
I languish for thy voice, which past me still
Went like a singing rill ?'

'I give thee to thy God—the God that gave thee,
A wellspring of deep gladness to my heart !
And precious as thou art,
And pure as dew of Hermon, He shall have thee,
My own, my beautiful, my undefil'd !
And thou shalt be His child.

Therefore, farewell !—I go, my soul may fail me,
As the hart panteth for the water brooks,
Yearning for thy sweet looks—
But thou, my firstborn, droop not, nor bewail me ;
Thou in the Shadow of the Rock shalt dwell,
The Rock of Strength.—Farewell !'

pp. 29—31.

The same high feeling of maternal duty and love inspires the little poem, 'The Wreck,' which everyone has read. 'The Lady of the Castle,' 'The Grave of Körner,' 'The Graves of a Household,' are all on domestic subjects. But why do we allude to poems, which are in everyone's hands ? The mother's voice breaks out again in the piece entitled 'Elysium.' Children, according to the heathen mythology, were banished to the infernal regions, and religious faith had no consolation for a mourning parent.

'Calm on its leaf-strewn bier,
Unlike a gift of nature to decay,
Too roselike still, too beautiful, too dear,

The child at rest before its mother lay ;

E'en so to pass away,
With its bright smile !—Elysium ! what wert *thou*,
To her who wept o'er that young slumberer's brow ?

Thou hadst no home, green land !
For the fair creature from her bosom gone,
With life's first flowers just opening in her hand,
And all the lovely thoughts and dreams unknown,
Which in its clear eye shone
Like the spring's wakening ! But that light was past—
—Where went the dew drop, swept before the blast ?

Not where thy soft winds play'd,
Not where thy waters lay in glassy sleep !—
Fade, with thy bowers, thou land of visions, fade !
From thee no voice came o'er the gloomy deep,
And bade man cease to weep !

Fade, with the amaranth plain, the myrtle grove,
Which could not yield one hope to sorrowing love !

For the most lov'd are they,
Of whom Fame speaks not with her clarion voice
In regal halls—the shades o'erhang their way,
The vale, with its deep fountains, is their choice,
And gentle hearts rejoice
Around their steps ! till silently they die,
As a stream shrinks from summer's burning eye.

And the world knows not then,
Not then, nor ever, what pure thoughts are fled !
Yet these are they, that on the souls of men
Come back when night, her folding veil hath spread,
The long remember'd dead !
But not with *thee* might aught save Glory dwell—
Fade, fade away, thou shore of Asphodel !'

pp. 211—213.

And the same feelings of a woman and mother dictated 'The Evening Prayer at a Girls' School,' a poem, which merits to be considered in connexion with Gray's 'Ode on a Distant Prospect of Eton College.'

'Oh ! joyous creatures, that will sink to rest,
Lightly, when those pure orisons are done,
As birds with slumber's honey-dew oppress'd,
'Midst the dim folded leaves, at set of sun—
Lift up your hearts !—though yet no sorrow lies
Dark in the summer heaven of those clear eyes.'

p. 147.

Of other spirited, and lively, and pathetic short poems of Mrs Hemans, which form some of the brightest ornaments of the lyric poetry of the language, we take no particular notice, for in what part of the United States are they not known? So general has been the attention to those of her pieces adapted to the purposes of a newspaper, we hardly fear to assert, that throughout a great part of this country there is not a family of the middling class, in which some of them have not been read. The praise which was not sparingly bestowed upon her, when her shorter productions first became generally known among us, has been often repeated on a careful examination of her works; and could we hope that our remarks might one day fall under her eye, we should hope she would not be indifferent to the good wishes which are offered her from America, but feel herself cheered and encouraged in her efforts by the prospect of an enlarged and almost unlimited field of useful influence, opened to her among the descendants of her country in an independent land. The ocean divides us from the fashions as well as the commotions of Europe. The voice of America, deciding on the literature of England, resembles the voice of posterity more nearly than anything else, that is contemporaneous, can do. We believe that the general attention which has been given to Mrs Hemans's works among us, may be regarded as a pledge that they will not be received with indifference by posterity.
